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SUBJECT: POPE CONDEMNS SHIA MOSQUE BOMBING

REF: STATE 028802

¶1. In response to the bombing of the Shia mosque on February 22, Pope Benedict XVI on February 26 severely condemned all "violence done in the name of God." Pope Benedict went on to emphasize, "These are the actions that sow mourning, fuel hatred and gravely hinder the already difficult work of the country's reconstruction." The pope's "firm condemnation for the violation of places of worship," was announced during the Sunday Angelus in Saint Peter's square to a crowd of thousands and published worldwide.

¶2. We also note the February 24 statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops declaring that they "strongly condemn this heinous terrorist attack on the Golden Mosque." Bishop Thomas Wenski, chairman of the Committee on International Policy issued a statement clearly stating that the Bishops' Conference is "alarmed and deeply disturbed by retaliatory attacks on other mosques and the loss of life that followed the attack." While not part of the Vatican hierarchy, the Bishops' Conference expresses the views of the American Catholic community and reinforces those of the Holy See.

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